

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 03044 141604Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 IO-13

DHA-02 ORM-02 SCCT-01 /076 W
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R 141524Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7697

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

CONFIDENTIAL DAMASCUS 3044

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE, PLO

SUBJECT: SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN TENSIONS

REF: (A) BEIRUT 4224, (B) DAO DAMASCUS 140915Z MAY 76,

(C) DAMASCUS 2986,

1. DESPITE INTENTIONS OF PLO LEADERSHIP TO COOPERATE WITH SYRIA TO RESOLVE LEBANESE CRISIS, THERE ARE NUMEROUS SIGNS OF TENSION IN SYRO-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP WHICH COULD UNDERMINE ABILITY OF BOTH PARTIES TO COORDINATE THEIR EFFORTS IN LEBANON. PARA 4 REF A CONTAINS THREE SUCH EXAMPLES: SHOOTING OF FATAH COMMANDER BY SYRIAN OFFICER PATROLLING CEASEFIRE LINES AND USE OF SAIQA-PLA TROOPS IN NORTH AND SOUTH LEBANON TO CARRY OUT WHAT ARE ESSENTIALLY SYRIAN DIRECTED ANTI-IRAQI OPERATIONS. FIRST EXAMPLE IN PARTICULAR ILLUSTRATES DILEMMA BETWEEN IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES -- RESTORATION OF INTERNAL SECURITY TO WHICH BOTH FATAH AND SYRIANS COMMITTED -- AND LOCAL TACTICAL SITUATIONS WHICH TEND TO PLACE PALESTINIAN AND SYRIANS FORCES, SOMETIMES

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 03044 141604Z

ACCIDENTALLY, ON OPPOSING SIDES. TRIPOLI CLASHES REFLECT SARG

EXPLOITATION OF PALESTINIANS TO HELP CARRY OUT SYRIAN POLITICAL OBJECTIVES AGAINST BAGHDAD REGIME (REF C). BEIRUT RADIO HAS REPORTED THAT PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP WISHES TO SEE PLA WITHDRAWN FROM TRIPOLI COMBAT ZONE.

2. ACCORDING TO OUR LOCAL SOURCES, MANY PALESTINIANS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY RESENTFUL OF BEING USED TO FURTHER WHAT THEY CONSIDER SYRIAN RATHER THAN PALESTINIAN GOALS. WE CONTINUE TO HEAR REPORTS OF INSTANCES IN WHICH PLA DISCIPLINE THREATENED TO BREAK DOWN BECAUSE OF FEELING ON PART OF SOME PLA OFFICERS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT FIGHT AGAINST FELLOW LEFTISTS, PARTICULARLY OTHER PALESTINIANS. FOR EXAMPLE, USUALLY RELIABLE PALESTINIAN SOURCE WITH GOOD PLA CONTACTS TOLD US MAY 13 THAT MANY PLA OFFICERS ORDERED INTO RECENT FIGHTING IN LEBANON HAVE REFUSED TO CARRY OUT THEIR ORDERS. HE COMMENTED THAT SOME OF THEM HAD BEEN RETURNED TO DAMASCUS FOR DETENTION.

3. WE UNDERSTAND FROM PALESTINIAN SOURCE THAT SYRIAN SECURITY MADE SWEEP OF SUSPECTED FATAH SUPPORTERS IN YARMUK CAMP DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS MAY 13, AN INDICATION THAT SARG ITSELF WORRIED ABOUT DETERIORATION ITS RELATIONS WITH FATAH. ANOTHER PALESTINIAN WITH GOOD RELIABILITY STATED MAY 13 THAT PALESTINIANS IN YARMUK CAMP FINDING INTOLERABLE THE CONTINUOUS STREAM OF DEAD AND WOUNDED RETURNED DAILY FROM LEBANON. HE SAID THAT TALK WITHIN COMMUNITY IS THAT EVERY MOTHER AT YARMUK HAS LOST AT LEAST ONE SON IN LEBANON AND ADDED THAT SARG SECURITY PRACTICE IN SUCH KIA CASES IS TO VISIT FAMILIES AND TELL THEM TO COME AND SEE BODY, WHICH IS THEN BURIED QUIETLY. HE ASSERTED THAT EVEN "OPPRESSION" FROM SECURITY SERVICES IS NOT PROVING SUFFICIENT TO KEEP LIK ON COMMUNITY, AND CONCLUDED THAT FEELING WAS WIDESPREAD IN DAMASCUS PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY THAT PALESTINIAN YOUTH SHOULD NOT DIE EITHER FOR SAKE OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SO CORRUPT THAT "REDRESS-ING CHRISTIAN/MUSLIM RATION ONLY MEANS REPLACING CHRISTIAN THIEVES WITH MUSLIM ONES", OR FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM PROGRAM OF JUMBLATT, "WHO WANTS A COMPLETE SOCIAL REVOLUTION WITHIN ONE MONTH."

4. COMMENT: FOREGOING SUGGESTS THAT ASAD WILL BE LESS AND LESS ABLE TO RELY UPON PALESTINIAN FORCES IF FIGHTING AGAINST LEFTISTS CONTINUES IN LEBANON. ANGER OF LOCAL PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 03044 141604Z

AND ALSO IMPROVED EGYPTIAN-PLO RELATIONS ARE MAKING PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP INCREASINGLY RELUCTANT BOTH TO FOLLOW SYRIAN DIRECTIVES AND ALSO TO SHED FURTHER PALESTINIAN BLOOD. WITH FEELINGS SO INFLAMED AMONG LOCAL PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY, MORE DEMONSTRATIONS MAY BE IN PROSPECT. THIS IN TURN COULD INCREASE SYRIAN RELIANCE ON ITS OWN MILITARY UNITS TO HELP RESTORE ORDER IN LEBANON.

MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC03044
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760188-0429
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760555/aaaabuoo.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BEIRUT 4224
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2004 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN TENSIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006